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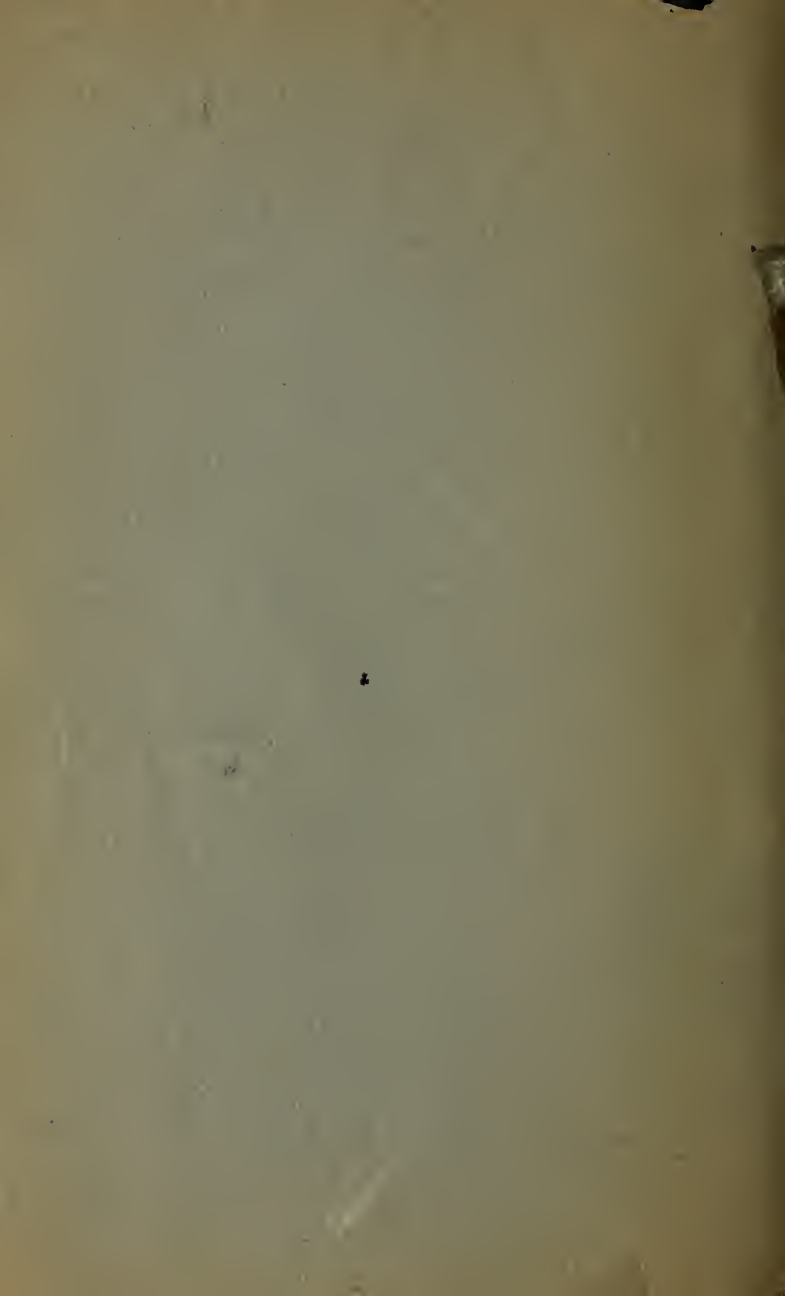
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BY
LADY GREGORY



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COATS

By

Lady Gregory

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BY

LADY GREGORY

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COATS

<i>Hazel</i>	.	.	.	EDITOR OF "CHAMPION"
<i>Mineog</i>	.	.	.	EDITOR OF "TRIBUNE"
<i>John</i>	.	.	.	A WAITER

COATS

Scene: Dining room of Royal Hotel Cloonmore.

Hazel: (Coming in.) Did Mr. Mineog come yet, John?

John: He did not, Mr. Hazel. Ah, he won't be long coming. It 's seldom he does be late.

Hazel: Is the dinner ready?

John: It is, sir. Boiled beef and parsnips, the same as every Monday for all comers, and an apple pie for yourself and Mr. Mineog.

Mineog: (Coming in.) Mr. Hazel is the first to-night. I 'm glad to see you looking so good.

(They take off coats and give to waiter.)

Mineog: Put that on its own peg.

Hazel: And mine on its own peg to the rear.

John: I will, sir. *(He drops coats in putting them up. Then notices broken pane in window and picks up the coats hurriedly, putting them on wrong pegs. Hazel and Mineog have sat down.)*

Hazel: Have you any strange news?

Mineog: I have but the same news I always have, that it is quick Monday comes around, and that it is hard to make provision to fill up the four sheets of the *Tribune*, and nothing happen-

ing in these parts worth while. There would seem to be no news on this day beyond all days of the year.

Hazel: Sure there is the same care and the same burden on myself. I wish I did n't put a supplement to the *Champion*. The deer knows what way will I fill it between this and Thursday, or in what place I can go questing after news!

Mineog: Last week passed without anything doing. It is a very backward place to give information for two papers. If it was not for the league is between us, and for us meeting here on every Monday to make sure we are taking different sides on every question may turn up, and giving every abuse to one another in print, there is no person would pay his penny for the two of them, or it may be for the one of them.

Hazel: That is so. And the worst is, there is no question ever rises that we do not agree on, or that would have power to make us fall out in earnest. It was different in my early time. The questions used to rise up then were worth fighting for.

Mineog: There are some people so cantankerous they will heat themselves in argument as to which side might be right or wrong in a war, or if wars should be in it at all, or hangings.

Hazel: Ah, when they are as long on the road as we are, they 'll take things easy.

Mineog: Now all the kingdoms of the earth to go struggling on one wrong side or another, or to bring themselves down to dust and ashes, it would not break our friendship. In all the years past there never did a cross word rise between us.

Hazel: There never will. What are the fights of politics and parties beside living neighbourly with one another, and to go peaceable to the grave, our selves that are the oldest residents in the Square.

Mineog: It will be long indeed before you will be followed to the grave. You did n't live no length yet. You are too fresh to go out and to forsake your wife and your family.

Hazel: Ah, when the age would be getting up on you, you would n't be getting younger. But it's yourself that is as full of spirit as a four-year-old. I wish I had a sovereign for every year you will reign after me in the Square.

Mineog: (*Sneezes.*) There is a draught of air coming in the window.

Hazel: (*Rising.*) Take care might it be open—no, but a pane that is out. There is a very chilly breeze sweeping in.

Mineog: (*Rising.*) I will put on my coat so. There is no use giving provocation to a cold.

Hazel: I'll do the same myself. It is hard to banish a sore throat.

(*They put on coats. John brings in dinner.
They sit down.*)

Mineog: See can you baffle that draught of air, John.

John: I'll go in search of something to stop it, sir. This bit of a board I brought is too unshapely.

Mineog: Two columns of the *Tribune* as empty yet as anything you could see. I had them kept free for the Bishop's speech and he did n't come after.

Hazel: That's the same cause has left myself with so wide a gap.

Mineog: In the years past there used always to be something happening such as famines, or the invention of printing. The whole world has got very slack.

Hazel: You are a better hand than what I am at filling odd spaces would be left bare. It is often I think the news you put out comes partly from your own brain, and the prophecies you lay down about the weather and the crops.

Mineog: Ah, I might stick in a bit of invention sometimes, when I'm put to the pin of my collar.

Hazel: I might maybe make an attack on the *Tribune* for that.

Mineog: Ah, what is it but a white sin. Sure it tells every person the same thing. It does n't tell many lies, it goes somewhere anear it.

Hazel: I spent a good while this evening searching through the shelves of the press I have

in the office. I write an article an odd time, when there is nothing doing, that might come handy in a hurry.

Mineog: So have I a press of the sort, and shelves in it. I am after going through them to-day.

Hazel: But it's hard find a thing would be suitable, unless you might dress it up again someway fresh.

Mineog: I made a thought and I searching a while ago. I was thinking it would be a very nice thing to show respect to yourself, and friendliness, putting down a short account of you and of all you have done for your family and for the town.

Hazel: That is a strange thing now! I had it in my mind to do the very same service to yourself.

Mineog: Is that so?

Hazel: Your worth and your generosity and the way you have worked the *Tribune* for your own and for the public good.

Mineog: And another thing. I not only thought to write it but I am after writing it.

Hazel: (*Suspiciously.*) You had not much time for that.

Mineog: I never was one to spare myself in anything that could benefit a friend.

Hazel: Neither would I spare myself. I have my article wrote.

Mineog: I have a mind to read my own one to you, the way you will know there is nothing in it but what is friendly and is kind.

Hazel: I will do the same thing. There's nothing I have said in it but what you will like to be hearing.

Mineog: (*Who has rummaged pockets.*) I thought I put it in the inside pocket — no matter—here it is.

Hazel: (*Rummaging.*) Here is my one. I was thinking I had it lost.

Mineog: (*Reading, after he has turned over a couple of sheets rapidly.*) "Born and bred in this Square, he took his chief pride in his native town."

Hazel: (*Turning over two sheets.*) "It was in this parish and district he spent the most part of his promising youth — Richly stored with world-wide knowledge."

Mineog: "Well able to give out an opinion on any matter at all."

Hazel: "To lay down his mind on paper it would be hard to beat him."

Mineog: "With all that, humble that he would halt and speak to you the same as a child —" I'm maybe putting it down a bit too simple, but the printer will give it a little shaping after.

Hazel: So will my own printer be lengthening out the words for me according to the type and

the letters of the alphabet he will have plentiful and to spare.

Mineog: "Well looking and well thought of. A true Irishman in supporting all forms of sport."

Hazel: What's that? I never was one for betting on races or gaining prizes for riddles.

Mineog: It is strange now I have no recollection of putting that down. It is I myself in the days gone by would put an odd shilling on a horse.

Hazel: These typewriters would bother the world. Wait now—let me throw an eye on those papers you have in your hand.

Mineog: Not at all. I would sooner be giving it out to you myself.

Hazel: Of course it is very pleasing to be listening to so nice an account—but lend it a minute. (*Puts out hand.*)

Mineog: Bring me now a bottle of wine, John—you know the sort—till I'll drink to Mr. Hazel's good health.

John: I will, sir.

Hazel: No, but bring it at my own expense till I will drink to Mr. Mineog. Just give me a hold of that paper for one minute only.

Mineog: Keep patience now. I will go through it with no delay.

Hazel: (*Making a snap.*) Just for one minute.

Mineog: (*Clapping his hand on it.*) What a hurry you are in! Stop now till I'll find the

place. "Very rarely indeed has been met with so fair and so neighbourly a man."

Hazel: Give me a look at it.

Mineog: What is it ails you? You are uneasy about something. What is it you are hiding from me?

Hazel: What would I have to hide but that the papers got mixed in some way, and you have in your hand what I wrote about yourself, and not what you wrote about myself?

Mineog: What way did they get into the wrong pocket now?

Hazel: (*Putting MS. in his pocket.*) Give me back my own and I will give you back your own.

Mineog: I don't know. You are putting it in my mind there might be something underhand. I would like to make sure what did you say about me in the heel. (*Turns over.*) "He was honest and widely respected." Was honest—are you saying me to be a rogue at this time?

Hazel: That's not fair dealing to be searching through it against my will.

Mineog: "He was trusted through the whole townland." Was trusted—is it that you are making me out to be a thief?

Hazel: Well, follow your own road and take your own way.

Mineog: "—— Mr. Mineog leaves no family to lament his loss, but along with the *Tribune*,

which he fostered with the care of a father, we offer up prayers for the repose of his soul." (*Stands up.*) It is a notice of my death you are after writing!

Hazel: You should understand that.

Mineog: An obituary notice! Of myself! Is it that you expect me to quit the living world between this and Thursday?

Hazel: I had no thought of the kind.

Mineog: I'm not stretched yet! What call have you to go offer prayers for me?

Hazel: I tell you I had it put by this long time till I would have occasion to use it.

Mineog: Is it this long time, so, you have been waiting for my death?

Hazel: Not at all.

Mineog: You to kill me to-day and to think to bury me to-morrow!

Hazel: Can't you listen? I was wanting something to fill space.

Mineog: Would nothing serve you to fill space but only my own corpse? To go set my coffin making and to put nettles growing on my hearth! Would n't it be enough to rob my house or to make an attack upon my means? Would n't that fill up the gap?

Hazel: Let you not twist it that way!

Mineog: The time I was in the face of my little dinner to go startle me with a thing of the sort!

I'm not worth the ground I stand on! For the *Champion* of next Thursday! I to be dead ere Thursday!

Hazel: I looked for no such thing.

Mineog: What is it makes you say me to be done and dying? Am I reduced in the face?

Hazel: You are not.

Mineog: Am I yellow and pale and shrunk?

Hazel: Why would you be?

Mineog: Would you say me to be crampy in the body? Am I staggy in the legs?

Hazel: I see no such signs.

Mineog: Is it in my hand you see them? Is it lame or is it freezed-brittle like ice?

Hazel: It is as warm and as good as my own.

Mineog: Let me take a hold of you till you will tell me has it the feel of a dead man's grip.

Hazel: I know that it has not.

Mineog: Is it shaking like a bunch of timber shavings?

Hazel: Not at all, not at all.

Mineog: It should be my hearing that is failing from me, or that I am crippled and have lost my walk.

Hazel: You are roaring and bawling without sense.

Mineog: Let the *Champion* go to flitters before I will die to please it! I will not give in to it driving me out of the world before my hour is

spent! It would hardly ask that of a man would be of no use and no account, or even of a beast of any consequence.

Hazel: Who is asking you to die?

Mineog: Giving no time hardly for the priest to overtake me and to give me the rites of the Church!

Hazel: I tell you there is no danger of you giving up at all! Every person knows there must some sickness come before death. Some take it from a neighbour and it is put on others by God.

Mineog: Even so, it 's hard say.

Hazel: You have not a ha'p'orth on you. No complaint in the world wide.

Mineog: That 's nothing! Sickness comes upon some as sudden as to clap their hands.

Hazel: What are you talking about? You are thinking us to be in the days of the cholera yet!

Mineog: There are yet other diseases besides that.

Hazel: You put the measles over you and we going the road to school.

Mineog: There is more than measles has power bring a man down.

Hazel: You had the chin-cough passed and you rising. - We were cut at the one time for the pock.

Mineog: A disease to be allotted to you it would find you out, and you maybe up twenty mile in the air!

Hazel: Ah, what disease could have you swept in the course of the next two days?

Mineog: That is what I'm after saying—unless you might have murder in your mind

Hazel: Ah, what murder!

Mineog: What way are you thinking to do away with me? To shoot me with the trigger of a gun and to give me shortening of life?

Hazel: The trigger of a gun! God bless it, I never fingered such a thing in the length of my life!

Mineog: To take aim at me and destroy me; to shoot me in forty halves like a crow in the time of the wheat!

Hazel: Oh, now, don't say a thing like that!

Mineog: Or to drown me maybe in the river, enticing me across the rotten plank of the bridge. (*Seizing bottle.*) Will you tell me on the virtue of your oath, is death lurking in that sherry wine?

Hazel: (*Pulling out paper.*) Ah, God bless your jig! And how would I know is it a notice of my own death has come into my hand in the pocket of this coat I put on me through a mistake?

Mineog: Give it here. That's my property!

Hazel: (*Reading.*) "We sympathise with Mrs. Hazel and the family." There is proof now. Is it that you would go grieving with my wife and I to be living yet?

Mineog: I did n't follow you out beyond this world with craving for the repose of your soul. It is nothing at all beside what you wrote.

Hazel: Oh, I bear no grudge at all against you. I am not huffy and crabbed like yourself to go taking offence. Sure Kings and big people of the sort are used to see their dead-notices made ready from the hour of their birth out. And it is not anything printed on papers or any flight of words on the *Tribune* could give me any concern at all. See now will I be put out. (*Reads.*) What now is this? "Mr. Hazel was of good race, having in him the old stock of the country, the Mahons, the O'Hagans, the Casserlys ——." Where now did you get that? I never heard before, a Casserly to be in my fathers.

Mineog: It might be on the side of the mother.

Hazel: It was not. My mother was a girl of the Hessians that was born in the year of the French. My grandmother was Winefred Kane.

Mineog: What is being out in one name towards drawing down the forecast of all classes of deaths upon myself?

Hazel: There are twenty thousand things you might lay down and I would give them no leave to annoy me. But I have no mind any strange family to be mixed through me, but to go my own road and to carry my own character.

Mineog: I would say you to be very crabbed

to be making much of a small little mistake of the sort.

Hazel: I will not have blood put in my veins that never rose up in them by birth. You to have put a slur maybe on the whole of my posterity for ever. That now is a thing out of measure.

Mineog: It might be the Casserlys are as fair as the Hessians, and as well looking and as well reared.

Hazel: There 's no one can know that. What place owns them? My tribe did n't come inside the province. Every generation was born and bred in this or in some neighbouring townland.

Mineog: Sure you will be but yourself whatever family may be laying claim to you.

Hazel: Any person of the Casserlys to have done a wrong deed at any time, the neighbours would be watching and probing my own brood till they would see might the track of it break out in any way. It ran through our race to be hard tempered, from the Kanes that are very hot.

Mineog: Why would the family of the Casserlys go doing wrong deeds more than another?

Hazel: I would never forgive it, if it was the highest man in Connacht said it.

Mineog: I tell you there to be any flaw in them, it would have worked itself out in yourself ere this.

Hazel: Putting on me the weight of a family I never knew or never heard the name of at all. It is that is killing me entirely.

Mineog: Neither did I ever hear their name or if they ever lived in the world, or did any deed good or bad in it at all.

Hazel: What made you drag them hither for to write them in my genealogies so?

Mineog: I did not drag them hither — Give me that paper. (*Takes MS. and looks at it.*) What would it be but a misprint? Hessian, Casserly. There does be great resemblance in the sound of a double S.

Hazel: Whether or no, you have a great wrong done me! The person I had most dependence on to be the most person to annoy me! If it was a man from the County Mayo I would n't see him treated that way!

Mineog: Have sense now! What would signify anything might be wrote about you, and the green scraws being over your head?

Hazel: That's the worst! I give you my oath I would not go miching from death or be in terror of the sharpness of his bones, and he coming as at the Flood to sweep the living world along with me, and leave no man on earth having penmanship to handle my deeds, or to put his own skin on my story!

Mineog: Ah it's likely the both of us will

be forgotten and our names along with us, and we out in the meadow of the dead.

Hazel: I will not be forgotten! I have posterity will put a good slab over me. Not like some would be left without a monument, unless it might be the rags of a cast waistcoat would be put on sticks in a barley garden, to go flapping at the thieves of the air.

Mineog: Let the birds or the neighbours go screech after me and welcome, and I not in it to hear or to be annoyed.

Hazel: Why would n't we hear? I 'm in dread it 's too much I 'll hear, and you yourself sending such news to travel abroad, that there is blood in me I concealed through my lifetime!

Mineog: What you are saying now has not the sense of reason.

Hazel: Tom Mineog to say that of me, that was my trusty comrade and my friend, what at all will strangers be putting out about me?

Mineog: Ah, what call have you to go lamenting as if you had lost all on this side of the sea!

Hazel: You to have brought that annoyance on me, what would enemies be saying of me? That it was in my breed to be cracked or to have a thorn in the tongue. There 's a generation of families would be great with you, and behind you they would be backbiting you.

Mineog: They will not. You are of a family does n't know how to say a wrong word.

Hazel: A rabbit mushroom they might say me to be, with no memory behind or around me!

Mineog: Not at all. The world knows you to be civil and brought up to mannerly ways.

Hazel: They might say me to have been a foreigner or a Jew man!

Mineog: I can bear witness you have no such yellow look. And Hazel is a natural name.

Hazel: It's likely they'll say I was a sheep-stealer or a tinker that went foraging around after food!

Mineog: You that never put your hand on a rabbit burrow or stood before a magistrate or a judge!

Hazel: They'll put me down as a grabber that was ready to quench a widow's fire!

Mineog: Oh, where are you running to at all my dear man!

Hazel: And I not to be able at that time to rise up and to get satisfaction! I to be wandering as a shadow and to see some schemer spilling out his lies! That would be the most grief in death! I to hit him a blow of my fist and he maybe not to feel it or to think it to be but a breeze of wind!

Mineog: You are going too far entirely!

Hazel: I to give out a strong curse on him and

on his posterity and his land. It would kill my heart if he would take it to be no human voice, but some vanity like the hissing of geese!

Mineog: I myself would recognise your voice, and you to be living or dead.

Hazel: You say that now. But my ghost to come calling to you in the night time to rise up and to clear my character, you would run shivering to the priest as from some unnatural thing. You would call to him to come banish me with a Mass!

Mineog: The Lord be between us and harm:

Hazel: To have no power of revenge after death! My strength to go nourish weeds and grass! A lie to be told and I living I could go lay my case before the courts. So I will too! I'll silence you! I'll learn you to have done with misspellings and with death notices! I'll hinder you bringing in Casserlys! I go take advice from the lawyer! (*Goes towards door.*)

Mineog: I'll go lay down my own case and the way that you have my life threatened!

Hazel: I'll get justice and a hearing. The Judge will give in to my say!

Mineog: I that will put you under bail! I'll bind you over to quit prophesying!

Hazel: I'll break the bail of the sun and moon before I'll give you leave to go brand me with strange names the same as you would tar-

brand a sheep! I'll put yourself and your *Tribune* under the law of libel!

Mineog: I'll make a world's wonder of you! I'll give plenty and enough to the *Champion* to fill out its windy pages that time!

Hazel: (*At door.*) I will lay my information before you will overtake me!

Mineog: (*Seizing him.*) I will lay my information against you for theft and you bringing away my coat!

Hazel: I have no intention of bringing it away!

Mineog: Is it that you will deny it? Don't I know that spot of grease on the sleeve?

Hazel: Did I never carve a goose? Why would n't there be a spot of grease on my own sleeve?

Mineog: Strip it off of you this minute!

Hazel: Give me back my own coat, so!

Mineog: What are you talking about! That 's a great wonder now. So it is not my own coat.

Hazel: Strip it off before you will quit the room!

Mineog: I'll be well pleased casting it off!

Hazel: You will not cast it on the dust and the dirt of the floor! (*Helps him.*) Go easy now. — That 's it — (*Takes it off gently and places it on chair.*)

Mineog: Give me now my own coat!

Hazel: (*Struggling with it.*) It fails me to get it off.

Mineog: What way did you get it on?

Hazel: It is that it is made too narrow.

Mineog: No, but yourself that has too much bulk.

Hazel: (*Struggling.*) There now is a tear!

Mineog: (*Taking his arm.*) Mind now, you 'll have it destroyed.

Hazel: Give me a hand, so.

Mineog: (*Helping him gently.*) Have a care—it 's a bit tender in the seams —— give me here your hand—it is caught in the rip of the lining.

John: (*Coming in, puts pie on table.*) Wait now, sir, till I 'll aid you to handle Mr. Hazel's coat. (*Whips off coat, takes up other coat, hangs both on pegs.*) The apple pie, Sir.

(*Hazel sits down, gasping and wiping his face. Mineog turns his back.*)

John: Is there anything after happening, Mr. Hazel?

Hazel: There is not—unless some sort of a battle.

John: Ah, what signifies? There to be more of battles in the world there would be less of wars. (*He pushes Mineog's chair to table.*)

Hazel: (*After a pause.*) Apple pie?

Mineog: (*Sitting down.*) Indeed, I am not any way inclined for eating.

(*Takes plate. John stuffs a cushion into window pane and picks up MSS.*)

John: Are these belonging to you, Mr. Mineog?

Mineog: Let you throw them on the coals of the fire, where we have no use for them presently.

Hazel: (*Stopping John and taking them.*) Thursday is very near at hand. Two empty columns is a large space to go fill.

Mineog: Indeed I am feeling no way fit to go writing columns.

Hazel: (*Putting his MS. in his pocket.*) There is nothing ails them only to begin a good way after the start, and to stop before the finish.

Mineog: (*Putting his MS. in his pocket.*) We'll do that. We can put such part of them as we do not need at this time back in the shelf of the press.

Hazel: (*Filling glasses and lifting his.*) That it may be long before they will be needed!

Mineog: (*Lifting glass.*) That they may never be needed!

Curtain



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